

VIII. CLAIMS APPENDIX

1. A workflow system, comprising:

design computer terminals for designing a workflow;

operation computer terminals for executing said workflow; and

a workflow server for managing said workflow connected to said design computer terminals and operation computer terminals via a network, wherein

said design computer terminals design the workflow by defining in advance activities that may be skipped and re-execution points in said workflow where previously skipped activities are executed, and wherein

said workflow server performs skip processing and reassignment processing for said operation computer terminals based on said workflow designed by said design computer terminals.

2. The workflow system of Claim 1, wherein

said design computer terminals design the workflow using a plurality of nodes serving as activities that perform transactions,

at least one recovery node serving as said re-execution point, and

paths connecting the nodes and recovery node.

3. A workflow system, comprising:

computer terminals for executing a workflow; and

a workflow server for managing said workflow connected to said computer terminals via a network, wherein said workflow server comprises:

means for defining a process flow by assigning transactions to predetermined operators, who operate said computer terminals, based on a workflow definition;

means for performing skip processing automatically or manually according to directions from said computer terminals for skipping part of the process flow by skipping one of said operators to whom the transaction is assigned; and

means for reassigning the skipped transaction to said one of said operators skipped by said means for performing skip processing, wherein the skipped transaction is executed.

4. The workflow system of Claim 3, wherein

said computer terminals send out completion of the transaction to the workflow server after performing the transaction assigned by said workflow server, wherein said transaction assigning means of the workflow server assigns a next transactor in response to the completion of said transaction from said computer terminals.

5. A workflow server for managing a workflow connected to a plurality of computer terminals, comprising:

means for assigning to a predetermined person a transaction performed as a business process transaction;

means for performing skip processing to skip the transaction assigned to said person; and

means for assigning re-execution of the transaction to the skipped persons at predetermined timing in said workflow.

6. The workflow server of Claim 5, wherein

said skip processing is performed when a skip request is received from a predetermined computer terminal connected to a network or when predefined conditions are satisfied.

7. A workflow server for managing a workflow connected to a plurality of computer terminals, comprising:

a workflow definition management subsystem in the workflow server for managing workflow definitions, said workflow definitions being designed to define a workflow that includes nodes that may be skipped and recovery nodes, the recovery nodes indicating points in the workflow where skipped nodes are executed;

a process management subsystem in the workflow server for managing processes created by using said workflow definitions;

a client request management subsystem in the workflow server for accepting a request from a person operating said computer terminal; and

a user management subsystem in the workflow server for controlling assignment of a person based on stored information about said person.

8. The workflow server of Claim 7, wherein

said process management subsystem automatically or manually ends an activity that is determined to be skipped, the activity serving as a transaction for each person forming said process, and then starts a next activity.

9. The workflow server of Claim 8, wherein

said process management subsystem stores information about the skipped activity as a skip list and assigns the skipped activity to an appropriate person by referring to the skip list when proceeding to processing of said recovery node while performing activities in sequence.

10. An information processing apparatus for defining a workflow to be executed by a plurality of computer terminals connected to a network, comprising:

a plurality of nodes corresponding to business processes assigned to persons in charge of execution of the workflow;

means for establishing a workflow using paths to connect the plurality of nodes;

means for establishing at least one node among said plurality of nodes in the workflow that may be skipped during execution of the workflow; and

means for establishing at least one recovery node in said workflow to define points on the workflow where transactions that were part of the at least one skipped node are executed.

11. The information processing apparatus of Claim 10, wherein

said means for establishing a flow displays said plurality of nodes with predetermined flow icons and connects said flow icons using said paths, while

said means for establishing at least one recovery node displays said at least one recovery node with at least one predetermined recovery icon and connects said at least one recovery node with predetermined nodes using said paths.

12. The information processing apparatus of Claim 10, further comprising

means for defining conditions for causing an automatic skip operation for said at least one skippable node established by said means for establishing said at least one skippable node.

13. A method for defining a workflow executed at a plurality of computer terminals connected to a network, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving, by a workflow definition management subsystem in a workflow server, a definition of a workflow that defines nodes that serve as business processes that are assigned to persons in charge of execution of the workflow;

receiving, by the workflow server, a designation of at least one of said nodes as a node that may be skipped during the execution of the workflow; and

receiving, by the workflow server, a designation of at least one recovery node that indicates a re-execution point in the workflow where the persons in charge of a previously skipped node re-execute the skipped business processes.

14. The method of Claim 13, further comprising the steps of:

forming a workflow using said established nodes and paths to determine a sequence of the business processes; and

establishing said at least one recovery node at pre-determined points on said workflow.

15. The method of Claim 13, further comprising the step of

establishing conditions for skipping any of said established nodes determined to be skippable.

16. A method for executing a workflow executed at a plurality of computer terminals connected to a network, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving, by a workflow server, an assignment of activities that are performed as transactions of business processes in the workflow to pre-determined persons who operate the computer terminals;

performing, by the workflow server, skip processing to skip at least one activity assigned to said persons; and

assigning, by the workflow server, re-execution of the at least one activity skipped to said persons whose assigned activities have been skipped, at a predetermined time in said workflow.

17. The method of Claim 15, wherein

a list of said activities assigned to each person is stored as a wordlist, and wherein

a transaction is performed by retrieving a transaction request from said work list.

18. The method of Claim 16, wherein

information about any of said persons whose assigned activities have been skipped is stored as a skip list, and wherein

re-execution of the skipped activities is performed in sequence based on the information stored in said skip list.

19. A computer-readable storage medium for storing a program code executable by a computer, the program code comprising the steps of:

establishing nodes serving as business processes that are assigned to persons in charge of execution of a workflow, the nodes being included in the workflow;

indicating that at least one of the nodes of the workflow may be skipped if the business processes of the at least one node cannot be completed when the workflow defines that the at least one node is to be executed; and

establishing at least one recovery node where the persons in charge of skipped nodes re-execute the business processes.

20. A computer-readable storage medium for storing a program code executable by a computer, the program code comprising the steps of:

assigning activities that are performed as a transaction of business processes in a workflow to predetermined persons in charge;

performing skip processing to skip one or more activities assigned to said persons; and

assigning re-execution of the skipped activities to said persons whose assigned activities have been skipped, at a predetermined time in said workflow.